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Date: November 3, 2004

New Dawn of Conservation Arrives in Colorado

Lakewood, CO – 10 Colorado watersheds were among the 202 across the nation invited to participate in a historic new program designed to reward farmers for long-term stewardship. USDA Secretary of Agriculture Ann M. Veneman recently announced the selected watersheds and said that sign-ups for the 2005 Conservation Security Program (CSP) would begin this winter.

CSP, part of the 2002 Farm Bill, was introduced last summer in 18 watersheds nationwide. In this first opportunity for farmers from each state to participate, about one eighth of the Nation's eligible farmers will be given the chance to apply.

"This program allows us to reward the sound conservation work many of our farmers and ranchers have been doing over past years," said Allen Green, NRCS State Conservationist, Colorado. *"It represents a whole new direction in conservation and agricultural policy and programs as these financial incentives are focused toward demonstrable long-term land stewardship."*

Participants will be enrolled in one of three tiers in the program, depending on the extent of the conservation treatment in place on their farm or ranch. Payments will be based in part on this existing conservation treatment as well as their willingness to undertake additional environmental enhancements.

Green goes on to say that "while protecting soil and water quality are the prerequisites for program participation, landowners will also have options to improve wildlife habitat, undertake on-farm energy conservation, improve air quality, participate in environmental monitoring, participate in watershed-wide stewardship programs, and improve nutrient and pest management activities."

CSP will continue to be offered each year, on a rotational basis, in as many watersheds as funding allows. For additional information regarding CSP and to see the Colorado watershed boundaries please visit our website at www.co.nrcs.usda.gov.

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